

# City of Welland - COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Monday, March 23, 2020

The City of Welland offers the following information and facts regarding COVID-19. A disease that everyone is learning about, and was only first identified in late 2019. We will continue to share more as we learn it. We encourage you to communicate with staff and members of the City's team.

For the most accurate and timely information please visit;

Local information at Niagara Region Public Health Unit:  
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/default.aspx>

Ontario Information at Public Health Ontario:  
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>

Canada Information at Canada Public Health:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

World Health Organization:  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>

## **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that was first identified in late 2019, in Wuhan, China. It is related to the SARS virus, and many agencies are working on the research, treatment, and vaccination of this virus.

## **How the virus works?**

COVID-19 must enter into the body, usually through the nose, mouth or eyes. In the next few days, the virus works to spread throughout the body, which generally does not show any symptoms, but the person may not be contagious to others at this point. As the virus spreads, their viral load increases. A person can be contagious without symptoms, but that doesn't mean that they are contagious, or that it will spread to other people. It just means that the amount of the virus (load) is at a level where it can spread.

## **How is the new coronavirus transmitted?**

We know that like the flu or the common cold, COVID-19 spreads by droplets, which is most commonly released from coughing or sneezing. The weight of these droplets means that these droplets can be moving/falling in the air for a short period of time/distance. This is why social distancing (keeping space between people) and good hygiene (cover cough/sneezes) and hand hygiene is most important.

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COVID-19 can still be active when they land on a surface, this is why cleaning has been increased, and everyone is asked to wash their hands regularly and keep their hands away from their face.

## **Is the virus airborne or droplet spread?**

COVID-19 is not airborne, so you cannot inhale the COVID-19 virus. You can contract it through kissing, mouth to mouth contact or by putting contaminated items (fingers, pens, etc.) in your mouth, eyes, nose. You should not ingest the droplets of other people, like inhaling droplets from others (this is why distance is essential).

## **Virus Life on Surfaces?**

COVID-19 has a short life on surfaces; on hard surfaces, it begins to die immediately and is dies off within several hours. On cardboard (paper products), it has a life expectancy of 24 hours.

## **How can we prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

During respiratory illness season, we always recommend that everyone:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water (or with alcohol-based hand rub, if soap is not available)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve
- Stay home if you are sick
- Practice physical distancing by avoiding unnecessary close interaction with others (e.g. shaking hands, or sharing personal items)
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly

## **Should staff who come in contact with the public wear masks?**

Masks are not effective in protecting you or others from COVID-19 (or similar ‘droplet’ viruses).

With Droplet Viruses, masks work from the inside out. They are used on people with symptoms or at high risk of symptoms to keep those droplets from spreading out to others. This is effective when used this way, termed “reverse isolation.” This is why patients are asked to wear masks while in the waiting room etc.

There is currently limited support of masks. The supply chains will hopefully increase soon, but masks are needed for those who need them most, i.e. healthcare workers, and people with or at high risk of COVID-19 who need to wear a mask to help protect others.

Masks can provide a false sense of security, and personal protection can be ignored. If people who don’t need a mask are going to use a mask, they need to ensure they wear it correctly, they do not touch it and then put it back on, they wash their hands regularly, and don’t touch their face. The concern is that people can have an increased risk of infection because they believe the mask protects them when it doesn’t. Improperly wearing or handling a mask can result in illness. Masks do not offer a guarantee of safety; in fact, they can present new risks.

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Generally, COVID-19 spreads in the same way as the typical Flu does. If you don't wear a mask all fall/winter season, why now?

## What is a Pandemic? KEY TERMS

**Pandemic** - is a word description to explain an epidemic that has spread across the country or further.

**Epidemic** - a localized spread of a disease within a large area, province/region

**Community Spread** – a localized spread of a disease within a community (a group of people like the City of Welland but may also be considered as Niagara Region).

All of these are descriptive words and are not a statement of risk to each person etc. They are terms used in the medical (epidemiology) and emergency management professions that describe the spread of disease—comments below about a state of emergency in Ontario.

## What is COVID-19 testing?

The province has opened specific centers to focus on the COVID-19 and people are tested during times when they show symptoms. Many people who contact the center will not be asked to come in for a test, and they will be asked to 'self-isolate.'

## What is self-monitoring?

**monitor yourself** for 14 days for one or more symptoms of COVID-19 go about your day but **avoid crowded places** and increase your personal space from others, whenever possible

## What is self-isolate?

**stay at home** and monitor yourself for symptoms, even if mild, for 14 days

**avoid contact with other people** to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community in the event you become symptomatic

## What is isolation?

**stay at home** until your Public Health Authority advises you that you are no longer at risk of spreading the virus to others

**avoid contact with other people** to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community, particularly people at high risk of severe illness outcomes such as older adults or medically vulnerable people

## What precautions is the City of Welland taking?

- Increased hand cleaning by all staff
- Increased hygiene and training – control cough, touching face
- Increased distancing between people and different groups
- Increased cleaning and sanitization
- Additional cleaning staff, hours
- Reduced access

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- Closure of buildings to public
- Questionnaire and screening of people
- site security for controlled access at facilities who take deliveries still
- key staff are being provided with gloves
- mail and package screening and isolation measures
- daily meetings among Corporate Leadership Team including departmental manager managers

## **Ontario declared a state of Emergency?**

Ontario declared a state of emergency because people were not responding fast enough to the advice and recommendations. The declaration of an Emergency allows the province to order the closure of businesses and other instructions (assembly of more than 50 people). Without this declaration, the province would not have the authority to close businesses and make other orders that are required to slow the spread of this disease.

## **Flattening the Curve?**

The primary goal is to stop the spread of COVID-19 by separating people, keeping people away will reduce the spread, and reduce the likelihood of people being infected. It is this reduction of cases of COVID-19 that will reduce the number of sick, allowing for the Health System to keep up with this disease. Keep in mind that the normal demand for emergency and health needs still exist, the demands of this virus are on top of existing demands.

## **Other illnesses and COVID-19?**

We are currently seeing a variety of 'strep throat' infections, and 'common cold' illnesses in Ontario and Niagara. This can worry about people who aren't sure what is wrong. This is normal in outbreaks such as this COVID-19 pandemic and requires more attention to detail.

## **Illness?**

COVID-19 is an illness that the majority of healthy people will be able to recover from. People with reduced immune systems and illnesses are at higher risk, and this is why we are all taking precautions to protect those who are at more risk.